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NAVAL WAR COLLEGE  
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**GULF WAR LESSONS LEARNED BY IRAQ  
(A.K.A. HOW TO FIGHT THE UNITED STATES AND WIN)**

by

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Departments of the Navy and Air Force.

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**Abstract of**  
**GULF WAR LESSONS LEARNED BY IRAQ**  
**(A.K.A. HOW TO FIGHT THE UNITED STATES AND WIN)**

The invasion of Kuwait was undertaken by Saddam Hussein to solve his severe economic problems, to fix a historical claim, to secure access to the Persian Gulf, and to increase his personal power and status within the Middle East. Iraq's campaign was built on some flawed assumptions and unraveled in execution. In a future campaign to invade Kuwait, Iraq could apply what it learned from the Gulf War. There are two main approaches: what Iraq could do to keep the United States out of the Gulf and how to fight deployed U.S. forces. Keeping U.S. forces out of Saudi Arabia would greatly hamper U.S. efforts to liberate Kuwait. If U.S. forces are deployed to the region, Iraq has three options. First, Iraq could fight the United States nose-to-nose and seek a negotiated settlement before the United States overwhelms the Iraqi forces. Secondly, Iraq could attempt to bloody the U.S. nose with attacks to inflict massive casualties in order to undermine the U.S. and Saudi Arabia's will to continue military actions against Iraq. And thirdly, Iraq could immediately seek a negotiated settlement hoping to keep at least part of Kuwait. Based on these approaches and options, USCENTCOM faces many serious planning challenges for the next Gulf War in terms of responding, deploying, and fighting.

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## PREFACE

No sooner than the last shot was fired, a prolific amount of printed material was generated covering virtually every aspect of the Gulf War.<sup>1</sup> For the most part, this large volume of books and articles provided the Coalition or American viewpoint. One major limitation of this research paper is the lack of indigenous research material from the Iraqi perspective. Iraq is still a closed, brutal, police-like society. In the attempt to fill this gap, this paper's source materials include articles and books authored from Middle Eastern authors in order to get a regional perspective.

One of the primary reasons for embarking on this research paper is to highlight those areas Saddam Hussein will focus Iraqi efforts in a future invasion of Kuwait. Too many things almost happened which could have turned Desert Shield/Desert Storm into Desert Disaster. Saudi Arabia almost did not allow U.S. forces into its country. Russia could have opposed U.S. military intervention. Israel could have entered the war. Any one of a dozen events could have occurred and unraveled the Coalition's cohesiveness, strategy, or outcome of the Gulf War. Contrary to many opinions, Saddam Hussein was a rational actor and he based his decisions on his perceptions, some were wrong and outdated but others were characteristically Middle Eastern. Too often Americans are guilty of mirror imaging their opponents and disregarding the complexities of the opponents' cultures and values which shape their perceptions.

This paper is an unclassified discussion of strategic and operational issues pertaining to the Iraq, the Gulf War, and a future Gulf war. No operations plans or other classified documents were used to develop this paper.

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# GULF WAR LESSONS LEARNED BY IRAQ

## (A.K.A. HOW TO FIGHT THE UNITED STATES AND WIN)

### CHAPTER I

#### INTRODUCTION

**Background.** Next to the American Civil War, the Gulf War might be one of the most overanalyzed conflicts in history. More ink than blood has been spilled before, during, and after the war with the quest for "lessons learned" flourishing into a veritable cottage industry. This paper focuses on the Iraqi perspective and applying what Iraq learned from the Gulf War to fight and win against the United States in a future Gulf War conflict.

**Methodology.** First, the Iraqi political objectives, strategies, and campaign are outlined. Saddam's many miscalculations are examined along with their corresponding impacts. Next, a future Iraqi campaign to invade Kuwait is developed based on what Iraq learned from the Gulf War. There are two main approaches, what Iraq could do to keep the United States out of the Gulf and how to fight deployed U.S. forces. Then, based on these approaches, various implications for U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) are presented.

**Assumptions.** One aspect of the Gulf War not addressed in this paper is the potential for Iraq to use nuclear weapons in the next Gulf War. Due to the degree that the United Nations inspection teams have dismantled Iraq's nuclear program; it's assumed that Iraq will not be able to produce or acquire a nuclear weapon for over ten years. The next Gulf war is assumed to occur within the next five to seven years.

**Thesis.** Although Saddam made many mistakes and miscalculations which lead to Iraq's defeat during the Gulf War; learning from those mistakes could provide the blueprint for fighting the United States and winning in the next Gulf War.

## CHAPTER II

### IRAQ AND THE GULF WAR

**Political Goals.** "Without full disclosure of the Iraqi war plans and an ability to read Saddam Hussein's mind, one can only examine the..." the strategic and operational aspects of the Gulf War based on the overt actions which took place.<sup>2</sup> On August 2, 1990 Iraq invaded Kuwait after nearly two years of negotiations, discussions, demands, and threats against Saudi Arabia and Kuwait by Saddam Hussein. Iraq's political objectives for the invasion were to solve its massive economic problems resulting from the Iran-Iraq War while fixing a historical claim and solving Iraq's perceived security concerns and access to the Persian Gulf. Saddam also had private ambitions that clearly shaped his decision to invade which included the desire to establish Iraq as the dominating hegemony within the Middle East, the drive to become the great Pan-Arab leader, and the wish to punish an arrogant Kuwaiti monarch for damaging oil policies.<sup>3</sup>

**Strategies.** Saddam used a strategy of intimidation and confrontation to justify his political goals. He expected the world to accept his invasion and annexation of Kuwait. If war occurred, Saddam planned to use a strategy of attrition, a replay of his Iran-Iraq War experience, which consisted of static, positional defenses with the objective of inflicting massive Coalition casualties.<sup>4</sup> The stated strategy of attrition was geared more towards deterring U.S. and Coalition military action rather than actual warfighting.

**Iraq's Campaign Plan.** The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait used numerically superior armored and mechanized forces and firepower to overwhelm the Kuwaiti armed forces. The initial Iraqi campaign plan had four distinct phases. The first phase was the buildup of forces north of the Kuwaiti border under the deception of a routine training exercise. This

phase also had a political dimension of posturing and sabre rattling towards Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. Phase two began on August 2, 1990 when Iraqi forces invaded Kuwait. Phase three was the consolidation of Iraq's hold over Kuwait. The fourth phase was the political and propaganda offensive waged to justify the invasion, to encourage Arab support for Iraq, and to make the annexation a done deal.<sup>5</sup>

**Centers of Gravity.** Kuwait had three operational centers of gravity, its military forces, oil reserves, and monarchy. Iraq's campaign plan attacked Kuwait's military forces and seized Kuwait's oil fields; however, the Kuwaiti royal family escaped to Saudi Arabia. Kuwait's overall military size relative to Iraq's was, without a doubt, the most significant vulnerability. Another factor contributing to Kuwait's vulnerability was that "...the United States had no defense treaties with any Arab Gulf states."<sup>6</sup>

At the strategic level, Saddam correctly identified the U.S. will as a critical center of gravity for U.S. involvement in this conflict. On the other hand, Iraq incorrectly perceived that the United States was still nursing the disasters of the Vietnam War and did not have the resolve to use force to liberate Kuwait. Saddam calculated that time was Iraq's ally and that prolonging the crisis would continue to weaken U.S. public support.<sup>7</sup>

**Command Relationships.** Saddam Hussein was the supreme Commander-in-Chief (CINC) for the Kuwaiti invasion campaign. The command structure was based on the Soviet Union's military structure. All major and many minor decisions were made only by the CINC; thus, this rigid, top-down command and control system didn't allow Iraqi commanders any leeway for initiative.<sup>8</sup>

**Miscalculations.** Although Iraq executed its invasion in only three days; the campaign was built on a flawed foundation (i.e., incorrect perceptions, assumptions, and

calculations) and poorly developed branches and sequels. One of Saddam's many miscalculations was the timing of the invasion of Kuwait.<sup>9</sup> Although the world was focused on the events of the European continent and disintegration of the Soviet Union, the world was on the path of positive change and a new world order. With the reduction of the Soviet threat in Europe, premier fighting American forces in Europe would be available for redeployment to a Middle East conflict. In addition, because of fiscal and international developments, the United States was just starting massive reductions of its military force structure; in two years the U.S. military forces would be almost 25 percent smaller than in 1990. Furthermore, Iraq was less than one year away from developing its own nuclear weapon, a capability which may have deterred U.S. intervention. Although severe economic pressures were a key driving force behind Saddam's invasion, waiting just one to two years would have given Iraq a better military advantage in terms of its military forces, its own nuclear weapons program, and a significantly smaller U.S. military force capability.

Another miscalculation was the scope of Saddam's invasion.<sup>10</sup> Just two days after the invasion, Saddam announced the annexation of all of Kuwait as the nineteenth providence. Had Saddam limited the invasion's scope to only the two strategic islands, Bubiyan and Warba, and the Kuwaiti portion of the Rumaila oil field while characterizing the incursion as a border dispute, the probability of a coalition intervention would have been virtually nil.<sup>11</sup>

Saddam Hussein also miscalculated the world response at the international and regional levels.<sup>12</sup> Saddam did not foresee that President Bush would take vigorous and unrelenting action to reverse the invasion of Kuwait. He could not imagine France and Russia severing economic and military ties with Iraq, especially since Iraq owed them billions. It was unthinkable that Russia would abandon its traditional adversarial role with

the United States and would take sides with the United States, the great ally to Israel (i.e., the enemy of all Arabs), against Iraq, one of the Soviet's few Middle East patrons. The loss of Russia also translated into the loss of valuable satellite intelligence capability and military resources needed by Iraq. He would not have predicted that the United Nations could pull together to pass Security Council resolutions condemning Iraq, authorizing force against Iraq, and punishing Iraq. Saddam could not envision Saudi Arabia allowing foreign forces on its soil to fight another Arab nation. While the rape, pillage, and plunder of Kuwait was considered the spoils of war to Iraq and not unlike day-to-day activities in Iraq; these atrocities gained worldwide attention, solidified world resolve, reaffirmed the need for military action, and eroded support for waiting for the sanctions to work against Iraq. Add to these atrocities the ecological damage of dumping oil into the Gulf and Saddam was an evil and irresponsible leader whose invasion could not be allowed to stand.

At the operational and tactical levels of war, Saddam miscalculated the military balance and the nature of the war. Allowing the Coalition to build and prepare their forces for war unopposed for five months was one of Saddam's greatest mistakes.<sup>13</sup> Add to this miscalculation the capacity of the Coalition to operate at the operational level of war, the ability to use the full range of U.S. high technology weapons and systems, the Coalition's unimpeded access to space-based surveillance, navigation, and communications systems, the superior personnel and training of the Coalition forces, and the ability to achieve early air superiority. As the result, the Coalition undermined the Iraq's command and control system, logistics system, air defense system, and predetermined warfighting strategy. Iraq was unable to gather tactical intelligence and, therefore, was unable to see the shape or nature of the battlefield. The Coalition's maneuver warfare bypassed most fixed defensive lines and exploited breakthroughs. The Coalition's airpower, applied precisely and simultaneously

against key Iraqi military targets, overwhelmed the defenses and demoralized the troops.

The Coalition's deception plans diverted Iraqi forces and maximized the effects of surprise.<sup>14</sup>

**Campaign Highlights.** While the Gulf War was a one-sided victory for the Coalition, Iraq did prove itself in three significant areas: deception, ballistic missiles, and sea mines. Although the Coalition has no empirical data on the deception capabilities and successes of Iraq's deception program, Russia has some unique insights since it had military advisors and observers throughout Iraq during the Gulf War. The effectiveness of Iraq's camouflage and deception program was one of the Iraqi capabilities that most impressed the Russians, especially in light of U.S. space reconnaissance capabilities. "...Iraqi systems of decoy targets and even of decoy target groupings caused problems for MNF [Multi-National Forces] forces in the first weeks of the air battle...up to 50% of the first MNF air strikes were carried out on false targets because of Iraq's extensive deployment of sophisticated dummy air defense systems...Iraq's skillful use of operational maskirovka together with the placement of important equipment and aircraft in shelters, which were made before the MNF space reconnaissance operations solidified, significantly reduced the effectiveness of the coalition's tactical aviation and cruise missiles."<sup>15</sup>

One of the most embarrassing aspect's of the Coalition's intelligence and air campaign was its failure to identify and destroy more than a small fraction of Iraq's ballistic missile inventory and the infrastructure supporting the development and manufacture of weapons of mass destruction (i.e., nuclear, biological, and chemical). Based on United Nations inspection teams' postwar analysis, Iraq emerged from the Gulf War with about 800 Scud missiles, 46000 loaded chemical weapons, 79000 unloaded weapons, 600 tons of chemical warfare agents, three nuclear weapon component factories, and approximately 30 nuclear

weapon laboratories intact. Although the intelligence community failed to detect and analyze the scope of Iraq's programs; Iraq had taken extraordinary measures to protect and conceal its facilities by burying and dispersing them.<sup>16</sup>

Another military capability that the Coalition was unable to effectively counter was the timely detection and destruction of mobile ballistic missile launchers. This inability was a remarkable Coalition shortcoming especially in view of the Scud's relative low technology and Iraq's lack of imagination employing these psychological terror weapons. When used against Israel, these weapons nearly brought Israel into the war which may have shattered the Coalition's cohesion. In the attempt to search and destroy the Scuds, the Coalition diverted approximately 4,000 combat air sorties and succeeded only in reducing the launch rates.<sup>17</sup>

Low cost, easily deployable sea mines were another weapon that the United States was unprepared to handle. Iraq laid about 1,200 mines during the Gulf War and these mines seriously damaged the U.S. Navy cruiser Princeton and amphibious ship Tripoli. The mine-infested coastal waters of Kuwait prevented any serious consideration of an amphibious landing due to the potential for significant U.S. casualties.<sup>18</sup>

Probably the most important aspect of the entire Gulf War was that the underlying causes were not solved and that the United Nations imposed on Iraq one of the harshest postwar settlements in history. Like Germany after World War I, it is probably only a matter of time before Iraq will try again to right the perceived wrongs and invade Kuwait and, possibly, Saudi Arabia.<sup>19</sup> And in the immortal words of Clausewitz,

"...the ultimate outcome of war is not always to be regarded as final. The defeated state often considers the outcome merely as a transitory evil, for which a remedy may still be found in political conditions at some later date."  
<sup>20</sup>

## **CHAPTER III**

### **HOW TO KEEP U.S. MILITARY FORCES OUT OF GULF REGION**

In the next Gulf War, one of Iraq's primary political and military objectives will be to keep the military forces of the United States out of the Persian Gulf region. One of the lessons from the Gulf War is that Iraq nor any other Third World nation has the resources or technological capabilities to slug it out with the United States military forces in a nose-to-nose confrontation.<sup>21</sup> The way to beat the United States is by not allowing them to play in the game. In order to keep the United States out of the game, Saddam Hussein must operate at the strategic and operational levels using the full spectrum of political, economic, and military tools to Iraq's advantage.

**U.N. Sanctions.** Iraq's first step is to do everything politically possible to get the United Nations sanctions lifted. If the United Nations fails to renew its sanctions against Iraq in 1994, it is highly unlikely that Saudi Arabia or Turkey will continue to allow U.S. forces remain in their countries. With the exception of Kuwait, no other Gulf nation has made any written defense agreements with the United States. As the result, the United States will have only a very small U.S. forward presence within the Gulf region (i.e., carrier in Persian Gulf or on tether in Indian Ocean, U.S. Army brigade prepositioned equipment in Kuwait, NAVCENT headquarters temporally ashore in Bahrain, large ammunition stocks in Saudi Arabia, other small military groups and equipment in other Gulf nations).

**Strategic Level Considerations.** The ultimate success of the future invasion of Kuwait will hinge on Saddam's orchestration of the strategic and operational levels of war. The objectives of the strategic level efforts will be to undermine U.S. public support, the key U.S. center of gravity, for any military action within the region and to convince Saudi

Arabia not to allow U.S. forces to deploy to Saudi Arabian territory. Unlike the Gulf War, in the next Gulf War Saddam must avoid diplomatic isolation, must isolate potential U.S. responses, and must use hostages and prisoners of wars as pawns to achieve the partial or full annexation of Kuwait.

U.S. Center of Gravity. The most crucial center of gravity of the United States is its public support for any effort involving its military forces. "The American public is cautious about foreign involvement: it believes strongly in the value of talk and opposes the use of military force."<sup>22</sup> The value of talk or the "Hope in communication is an outgrowth of this underlying optimism toward other peoples. Americans invariably favor communication with other countries and allies alike...Americans believe that a willingness to discuss differences is an essential part of civilized behavior."<sup>23</sup> In other words, the United States public does not automatically support the use of its military forces overseas, especially if the United States has not been directly attacked. Thus, one way to create opposition to the use of military force within the United States is to maintain a willingness to negotiate. Bear in mind that negotiations open the door to delays, manueverings, and concessions while undermining any impetus for immediate military action.

Role of Saudi Arabia. "Saudi Arabia always resisted a visible U.S. force presence on its soil, and during those critical first few days following Iraq's occupation of Kuwait, the House of Saud was deeply divided over the issue of seeking U.S. military intervention."<sup>24</sup> Saudi Arabia decided to allow foreign troops on its soil due to uncertainties of Saddam's intentions caused by positioning of large Iraqi forces on the Saudi border and three apparently inadvertent border incursions.<sup>25</sup> Saudi Arabia's decision to allow foreign troops on its soil was the key enabler for Western forces in their efforts against Iraq. The "...most

important feature of Desert Storm's strategic and operational setting was the availability to the United States and its Coalition partners of a vast, modern, ready-made logistical infrastructure in Saudi Arabia, a cornucopia of over thirty air bases; eight port facilities, some of them among the world's largest and most modern; abundant supplies of refined petroleum products; and plenty of empty desert to which to deploy and train.<sup>26</sup> Had Saudi Arabia not allowed foreign troops on its soil, the United States and the Coalition would have been forced into a completely different course of action, one which may have even allowed Iraq's partial or complete annexation of Kuwait stand!

In a future invasion of Kuwait, Iraq must convince Saudi Arabia beyond any doubt that Iraq has no plans to invade Saudi Arabia, the protector of the holy sites. The foundation for convincing Saudi Arabia was laid during the Gulf War. With the exception of the inadvertent border incursions caused by the friction and fog of war during the initial Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and Iraq's failed spoiling attack into Khafji trying to get the ground war started, Iraq did not invade Saudi Arabia. Remind Saudi Arabia about the Gulf War and assure the royal family that only a small contingent of Iraqi forces will be placed on the border. Saddam must personally assure the House of Saud that Iraq will not invade Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia must be warned that the introduction of the first United States air, ground, or sea forces in their soil will automatically trigger an invasion of Saudi Arabia and possibly terrorist attacks. If Iraq is convincing and successful, Saudi Arabia will not request or allow U.S. force deployments to Saudi Arabia. If unsuccessful, U.S. forces will begin deployments within 24 to 48 hours of the Saudi Arabian permission.

**Avoid Diplomatic Isolation.** During the Gulf War, President George Bush almost single-handedly isolated Iraq in the diplomatic arena and forged the international response

against Iraq. Two of his most significant accomplishments were the United States-Russian alliance and the Coalition which included Arab nations. At the strategic level, both of these alliances were centers of gravity and were developed by President Bush's brilliant telephone diplomacy and the shuttle diplomacy of his Secretaries of State and Defense. The United States-Russia alliance unexpectedly removed Iraq's superpower protector. In addition to the loss of the Russian shield for Iraq, this alliance removed a key source for new arms, equipment, and spare parts for Iraq's current inventory.<sup>27</sup> In addition, the Coalition's alliance depended heavily on the support of the Arab nations within the region. Had anything disrupted these two unprecedented alliances, the United States would have been forced into a very different strategy to liberate Kuwait.

Another key aspect of Bush's diplomatic isolation of Iraq was use of the United Nations Security Council. He used the United Nations Security Council to pass a number of resolutions which not only condemned and isolated Iraq at an international level, but also provided a way to legitimize U.S. military intervention in the Persian Gulf.<sup>28</sup>

To counter any future attempts of diplomatic isolation, Iraq must develop close and mutually beneficial relationships with various international and regional states, especially with Russia, China, and France--permanent U.N. Security Council members. Saddam must persuade at least one of the permanent U.N. seat holders to veto any resolution which would condemn or act against Iraq and its future invasion of Kuwait. All three of these nations, to one degree or another, do not like to blindly follow the United States. During the Cold War the Soviet Union and China could both be counted upon to veto certain United States-sponsored resolutions. If this avenue of legitimacy and support is removed, then diplomatic isolation is much more difficult to achieve. Iraq should also attempt to get Iran as an overt or covert ally. Iran has military capabilities and strategic locations which could greatly aid

Iraq's efforts against the United States. Even if the United States perceived an alliance between Iraq and Iran, it may deter certain U.S. actions like deployment of U.S carriers into the Persian Gulf through the Straits of Hormuz.

Isolate Potential U.S. Responses. Another key aspect of a future Gulf War is that Iraq needs to isolate potential U.S. responses. The prime area providing the greatest payoff is keeping the United States and foreign troops out of Saudi Arabia. As discussed previously, depriving the United States or any Coalition of this prime initiative would exponentially improve the chances of Iraqi success and United States' and Coalition's defeat.

Sun Tzu stated that it's "of supreme importance in war to attack the enemy's strategy;...Next best is to disrupt his alliances."<sup>29</sup> Attacking the Coalition's alliances could involve the use of Iraqi state-sponsored terrorism, indigenous insurgents, or opposition political parties within the Middle East region. The governments of Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Turkey, and the small Gulf states are very vulnerable to the use of terrorism or insurgents. During the Gulf War, Saddam's terrorist threat never materialized; therefore, the susceptibility of these governments to these actions can only be presumed. Another method is to attack Israel or to send Iraqi forces into Jordan and provoke Israel to get involved with the war.<sup>30</sup> The Scud attacks on Israel proved unsuccessful during the Gulf War because of the diplomatic efforts of President Bush; however, the movement of Iraqi forces into Jordan may elicit the response needed to get Israel into the war. An unappealing aspect of attacking Israel is that country's nuclear monopoly in the region. However, nothing unites Arab nations faster than conflict with Israel. Coalition members would probably not remain with the Coalition if Israel is also fighting Iraq; and, thus, causing the Coalition to fracture. Unlike the Gulf War, if Russia sides with Iraq and opposes U.S. actions, then other Arab

nations who despise Western influence will rally behind Russia and Iraq. Building a coalition without Russian support would be difficult and tedious.

Hostages. The use of hostages as shields or pawns failed during the Gulf War. In the invasion of Kuwait, Saddam took more than 13,000 westerners and other foreigners hostage.<sup>31</sup> "Diplomats convinced Saddam that if he wanted any hope of a settlement, the hostages must be released. Saddam misinterpreted this diplomatic language as telling him that if the hostages are released, those targets would not be attacked."<sup>32</sup> While using hostages as shields is illegal under international law; it is a means to achieve an end. Taking hostages will result in an international response condemning this action; however, it is far more likely that these hostages will offer a degree of protection to the facilities and forces they shield. Unlike the Gulf War, these hostages must not be released until Iraq's political objections are achieved. While the United States has a policy of not negotiating for hostages; the United States could not withstand the aftermath of bombing targets with known hostage positioned as shields.<sup>33</sup> As long as the hostages remain, the facilities and forces would be protected. Iraq must convey to the world that the use of hostages is a means of protecting itself as an underdog against the mighty United States. These hostages must be treated with dignity and respect at all times. The hostages and diplomatic efforts for their release may cause delays which, in turn, subverts U.S. public support. To undermine the Coalition, Iraq could use hostage releases as a way to encourage nations to sign agreements or make overt announcements denouncing their membership to any coalition effort while supporting diplomatic efforts to end the crisis. Extensive news media coverage of the hostages and their pleads to seek peaceful solutions and avoid military actions is another tactic to use the media to achieve Iraqi goals. The risk of the illegal use of hostages may galvanize resolve against

Iraq; however, military action is unlikely since any attempt to rescue thousands of hostages scattered at hundreds of different locations within Kuwait and Iraq will ultimately fail.

**Operational Level Campaign.** In the next major Middle East crisis, Saddam's primary course of action will involve an operational campaign which is closely linked to strategic level considerations. The political and military objectives include a rapid take-over of Kuwait; maximum capture of military equipment, especially U.S. military prepositioned stocks; maximum hostages; and no atrocities. At the time determined to achieve maximum surprise and deception, the Iraqi military forces will invade Kuwait in order to rapidly secure Kuwait's borders under Iraqi military and, ultimately, political control. Actions included within this course of action include a wide variety of forces and purposes. Special operations and elite forces will attempt to capture members of the Kuwait royal family and other highly influential financial and business leaders; will secure critical transportation junctions, especially land, air, and sea escape routes to Saudi Arabia; and will neutralize critical military and civilian facilities like Kuwait command and control facilities, television and radio stations, runways, and the U.S. military prepositioned equipment facility. Iraqi armored and mechanized forces will perform a two-pronged invasion of Kuwait by breaching the northern Kuwait-built trench built along the border and perform a frontal assault and a western envelopment of Kuwait. In conjunction with establishing air superiority over the Kuwait theater of operations, Iraqi air forces will provide close air support to ground forces. Rebuilt Iraqi sea forces will blockade the Kuwait port until secured by Iraqi ground forces and, then, begin sea mining operations. Other important considerations of this course of action include command arrangements, timing and deception, and rules of engagement.

**Command Relationships.** Unlike the Gulf War, the entire military campaign to

invade Kuwait must be commanded by a single, on-the-scene military commander who answers directly to Saddam Hussein. Saddam Hussein will need to act as a strategic level leader as opposed to his role of strategic leader/operational commander during the Gulf War. This commander must have unquestionable loyalty to Saddam as well as the military education in operational art provided by a Russian or Western war college (i.e., to avoid significant shortcomings in military planning like leaving an exposed right flank during the Gulf War). This single commander, the supported commander, will have combatant control over all air, land, and sea forces in the theater of operations which includes Kuwait, the upper Persian Gulf, and the southeastern third of Iraq. His staff will include a senior component commander and dedicated staff from each of the Services.

**Timing and Deception.** Timing and deception are two critical factors of the entire campaign at the strategic and operational levels. At the strategic level, the time period of this campaign should be in the late 1990s, after the United States force structure reductions, especially the Bottom-Up Review reductions, which would place the United States at a significant numerical disadvantage to rapidly respond as they did during the Gulf War. At both the strategic and operational level, the campaign should occur at a time which offers the maximum surprise, advantages, and constraints on Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and the United States. During the Arab-Israeli War of 1973 Sadat launched a surprise attack against Israel during Ramadan, the most holiest time of the year for Muslims.<sup>34</sup> During the Gulf War the United States and the Coalition launched its air and ground operations well prior to this same holiday to avoid any potential conflicts with this holy time period. Another key consideration is whether the United States is involved in another major regional contingency (MRC) since many defense experts doubt the U.S. capability to respond to a second MRC

while engaged the first.<sup>35</sup> Seasonal weather conditions are also a necessary consideration since Western and Saudi Arabian air forces and certain space surveillance platforms need clear weather for their maximum performance. The target date and time of the Kuwaiti invasion will be a critical consideration.

Operational deception must equal or exceed the initial successes of the Egyptians during the Arab-Israeli War of 1973.<sup>36</sup> Over a period of time, Iraq must mass sufficient supplies along the Kuwait border in underground bunkers and tunnels to support the rapid projection of power into Kuwait without detection of U.S. aerial or satellite platforms.

**Rules of Engagement.** The key rule of engagement for Iraqi military and paramilitary forces operating within Kuwait is that all hostages and prisoners of war will be treated well. Rape, pillage, and plunder will not be tolerated and Iraqi violators will be punished quickly and severely. During the Gulf War, the brutal treatment and atrocities within Kuwait were used by the media and the West as a means to galvanize international and regional response against Iraq. Americans and Congress are very concerned about human rights violations and will initially tend to support any President's decision to use military force to stop atrocities. Hostages and prisoners of war will be used as one of the political pawns (i.e., means) to achieve the successful annexation of Kuwait (i.e., ends); and must be treated well to avoid giving the United States additional reasons to react militarily.

Ultimately, this campaign is nearly a replay of the Gulf War with emphasis on ways to keep the United States out of the conflict based on what Iraq learned from the Gulf War. If the United States begins deployment to the region, unlike the Gulf War, Iraq must have already developed that branch in the campaign.

## CHAPTER IV

### HOW TO FIGHT DEPLOYED U.S. FORCES

If the United States deploys troops and equipment to the region, Iraq will face two different scenarios. Saudi Arabia may or may not allow U.S. forces on its soil. For Iraq, the best scenario would be if Saudi Arabia does not allow U.S. forces on its soil.

**No U.S. Forces in Saudi Arabia.** If the United States were not allowed in Saudi Arabia, Iraq would have a distinct advantage over the United States. Without the extensive logistical infrastructure of Saudi Arabia, the United States would be severely constrained in its ability to project combat power to liberate Kuwait. Without Saudi airfields, the United States could only exert approximately 10 to 25 percent of the airpower capability available during the Gulf War, even with the use of Turkish air bases.<sup>37</sup> Without the Saudi ports and staging areas, the United States would need to plan for an opposed forced entry into Kuwait by amphibious landing through mined coastal waters and defensive positions. Once the U.S. Marines established a beachhead, Iraqi ground forces could quickly outnumber and overwhelm the U.S. forces. Sea mining and frontal amphibious assaults against prepared defensive positions would result in high casualties not to mention the potential for destruction if overwhelmed on the beachhead. When confronted with a scenario without the assistance of Saudi Arabia, the most viable course of action is a negotiated settlement since the United States would probably not support an operation with the potential for a high U.S. casualties.<sup>38</sup>

**U.S. Forces in Saudi Arabia.** If Saudi Arabia allows U.S. forces into its country, then Iraq has three options: fight U.S forces nose-to-nose, bloody their noses, or negotiate a settlement.

**Fight United States Nose-to-Nose.** Iraq demonstrated that waiting for five months

and fighting the United States and the Coalition at the place and time of the Coalition's choosing is not a viable option; Third World countries do not have the resources in terms of equipment, forces, and technology to take on a coalition backed by the only remaining superpower. If Iraq had attacked immediately, eventually the United States and the Coalition would have overwhelmed the invading Iraqi force although with significantly higher Coalition casualties. Therefore, if Iraq decides to fight the U.S. nose-to-nose, Iraqi military forces should invade and seize the northern coastal oil fields and ports of Saudi Arabia when the first U.S. air or ground forces deploy to Saudi Arabia. Like the invasion of Kuwait, hostages and prisoners of war will be high-priority political weapons. Using the same rules of engagement, these hostages could shield Iraqi forces and captured facilities while providing leverage against Saudi Arabia and the United States. Although the United States can deploy air forces and light forces into Saudi Arabia within 24 to 48 hours, it takes about 14 days to deploy enough U.S. ground and air forces to stop an Iraqi invasion force in Saudi Arabia.<sup>39</sup> Throughout this invasion, Iraq should continue to make diplomatic moves for negotiations in exchange for withdrawal of U.S. forces and a pull-back of Iraqi forces. The objective of this invasion is to apply pressure to Saudi Arabia and the United States for a negotiated settlement and the acceptance of Kuwait's annexation.

**Bloody U.S. Nose.** The goal of a bloody nose operation is to strike hard and inflict significant U.S. casualties with the ultimate aim of turning American and Saudi Arabian support away from using military force to settle the conflict. The strike could take the form of a massive weapons of mass destruction launch of Scud missiles armed with conventional, chemical, and biological warheads with improved accuracy, range, and payload capabilities. The target areas would be a U.S. beachhead, logistics bases, airfields, port facilities, oil

facilities, or desalination plants. During the Gulf War, Scud attacks consisted of a small number of missiles; and, as the result, Patriot batteries seemingly destroyed the Scuds by launching two missiles against each incoming Scud. In a bloody nose operation, the massive Scud attack should be a coordinated, daylight attack consisting of a hundred or more missiles in a barrage attack. In this fashion, American Patriot terminal defenses could be quickly overwhelmed, the potential for damage and casualties increases significantly, and the propaganda and psychological terror value increases exponentially. The risk of retaliation by the United States is high; however, it's highly unlikely that the United States would employ a retaliatory chemical or biological attack or escalate to a nuclear strike.<sup>40</sup> Another tactic could be multiple, coordinated special operations attacks against these same facilities. Unlike Gulf War where Saddam's call for worldwide terrorist attacks did not materialize, in the next Gulf War, these special operations "terrorist-like" attacks will inflict casualties, disrupt force buildups, and will result in additional Coalition forces being used for protection of these areas which will slow down the entire Coalition effort.<sup>41</sup> These attacks may erode support of Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states for continued military action. Immediately after these attacks, Iraq must continue its offer to negotiate a settlement. Considerable risk surrounds the bloody nose operation; it could either create a groundswell of negative American support for continuing the intervention as in Beirut and Somalia; or it could backfire and enrage the American people and galvanize their support behind the effort. No one can ever accurately predict the direction of the American public support.

Negotiated Settlement. The last option is for Iraq to immediately seek a diplomatic or negotiated solution with commensurate withdrawal actions. This option places immediate dangers to coalition unity and U.S. domestic support. If Saddam makes a genuine offer to

negotiate and began to withdraw forces, it is very likely that European or Arab allies would press for face-saving concessions to Saddam.<sup>42</sup> Although the United States may have had Saudi Arabia's permission and support up to this point, if Saudi Arabia agrees to allow Iraq to keep all or part of Kuwait, then they would probably not support continued U.S. deployments or further Coalition military actions beyond purely defensive efforts. Once the negotiating process begins, it could protract allowing Saddam time to consolidate his hold on Kuwait and exploit additional weaknesses within coalition. At the very least, Iraq would probably be permitted to keep the two strategic islands, Bubiyan and Warba, and the Kuwaiti portion of the Rumaila oil field.

## CHAPTER V

### IMPLICATIONS FOR USCENTCOM

Since Iraq still maintains its claim to Kuwait as its nineteenth province, the potential for Iraq to invade Kuwait applying its lessons learned from the Gulf War has many serious implications for future strategic and operational planning in USCENTCOM's Area of Responsibility. In the future when Iraq invades Kuwait, if Saudi Arabia does not allow the United States on its soil, USCENTCOM will face a nightmare scenario at the operational level. The most significant impact will be the loss of the world's best developed infrastructure in terms of ports, airfields, and staging areas to accept massive deployments of military forces. This crucial loss translates directly into a significant decrease in the United States' ability to project air- and land-based combat power. Since there's virtually no chance that Iran would allow U.S. forces to use Iran as a staging area into Kuwait or Iraq; an opposed amphibious assault through sea mines and defended beach emplacements against a potentially numerically superior force may be the only way to conduct a forced entry into Kuwait. This type of force entry would result in significantly increased casualties, probably in the thousands. This scenario would not be readily supported by the American people or Congressional leaders and would require the President to clearly justify his decision in terms of national interests, especially if Iraq was able to get Russia, China, or France to veto U.N. Security Resolutions dealing with Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. This scenario becomes more dangerous if Iran overtly or covertly allies itself with Iraq. Overall, if this scenario came to pass, the United States would probably seek a diplomatic solution rather than using military force.<sup>43</sup>

If Saudi Arabia allows the United States into their country in a future Gulf War and Iraq continues its invasion into Saudi Arabia, USCENTCOM will face another scenario of a

different and, perhaps, a more dangerous degree at the operational level. Under this scenario, U.S. military forces will literally hit the ground fighting with no time to build force levels, no time to acclimatize to the region's weather, no time to prepare for operations or to rehearse, and no time to scout the opposing forces and develop a synchronized campaign. All three Iraqi options in this scenario have dangerous aspects for U.S. forces and interests.

Although the "Fight U.S. Nose-to-Nose" option is probably already in USCENTCOM's deliberate planning process, the hostage aspect is one where strategic guidance and specific Rules of Engagement need development prior to the crisis. Political and military understandings must be discussed and outlined with Saudi Arabia and other regional Gulf states to hasten Saddam's ability to make a separate peace to keep Kuwait. Strategic leaders must realize that allowing Iraq's retention of Kuwait demonstrates that aggression pays and ultimately strengthens Iraq's position in the region. Iraq could use this success as a means for continued regional intimidation.

The "Bloody U.S. Nose" option is the most dangerous for both U.S. forces and public support. If Iraq launches a ballistic missile or special operations attack and succeeds in inflicting significant U.S. casualties, the resulting psychological and physical damage may be the straw that breaks the Coalition's back as well as U.S. public support. To avoid the potential results of this option, USCENTCOM needs to plan for more dispersal and protection of deployed assets. During the Gulf War, the massive troop and equipment buildups at the docks, airfields, logistics bases, and staging areas provided lucrative targets for this kind of potential attack by Iraq.

In the "Negotiated Settlement" option, from an operational military viewpoint, USCENTCOM can do little except making political and military leaders knowledgeable of Saddam's possible options and the potential implications of U.S. and Coalition responses. If

Iraq is allowed to retain all or part of Kuwait, Iraq's position is strengthened, especially in terms of regional hegemony. Iraq could control up to 40 percent of the known oil reserves placing Iraq in an influential position in the oil and world economy. Restoring regional balance would be difficult unless bolstered by the presence of a permanent U.N. or Arab Peacekeeping Force in Kuwait or Saudi Arabia; by a strict oil embargo on oil sales and military equipment to Iraq in order to reduce Iraq's military capability; and the United States' extension of military guarantees to regional states. However, it's difficult to maintain a U.S. forward presence and security guarantees after a substantial foreign policy failure and to maintain sanctions and an embargo when other Arab nations will be trying to make their best possible deal to avoid Saddam's wrath. The international community would probably not support sanctions after giving up Kuwait to Iraq.

Sea mines will continue to pose a serious threat in both scenarios and will threaten the transportation of initial reinforcements and supplies into the Gulf ports. Mining of ports or chokepoints such as the Straits of Hormuz, could disrupt critical sea lanes for many days, especially at the onset of hostilities.<sup>44</sup> During the Gulf War, only about 30 sealift ships arrived in the first month, including 20 prepositioning force ships carrying the equipment for two Marine Expeditionary Brigades and initial supplies for the Army and Air Force. Loss of just two to three of these ships would have presented a serious setback in the initial buildup of forces. Without greatly expanding U.S. and regional mine countermine measures, sea mines will also limit the viability of amphibious assaults. During the Gulf War, Antisubmarine Warfare (ASW) was not a serious consideration however, with Iran possessing two Kilos and the unknown possibility of Iraq acquiring minisubs or a submarine, ASW will be a serious concern for future contingencies, especially due to the difficulties of conducting ASW in the Persian Gulf.

The United States and USCENTCOM needs to be concerned about the role of Russia and Iran in the next Middle East conflict. Russia could restrain Iraq's political and military activities; or, on the other hand, could make it difficult for the United States to intervene if Russia supports Iraq. Russia or China, if their interests are not aligned with the United States, could veto U.N. Security Council resolutions. Certain Arab states, who despise Western influence, could align themselves with Russia and Iraq against the United States making the crisis even more difficult to settle. Russia, China, or France could provide the high technology resources and equipment to disrupt U.S. operations like satellite overflight times and capabilities, precision guided munitions and night vision countermeasures, and satellite uplink/downlink denial capabilities.

Iran poses special dangers to U.S. naval forces operating in the Persian Gulf. Iran has Silkworm antiship missiles in emplacements around the Straits of Hormuz. Recently, Iran seized the Tunbs Islands and could easily deploy Silkworms and other forces to these small islands to more effectively threaten or control the Straits. Iran's two Kilo submarines have the capability for torpedoes and mines which would pose special hazards to shipping in the region. The one thing USCENTCOM doesn't need is Iran unilaterally striking a blow against the United States or cooperating militarily with Iraq. While many politicians and strategists consider an Iraqi-Iranian alliance unthinkable, Iran's capabilities cannot be dismissed. Iran and Iraq could put aside their differences, especially if the stakes were high enough.

To support its peacetime and wartime strategies, USCENTCOM needs to maintain active, visible forward presence operations within the region. USCENTCOM needs to strengthen regional ties with Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf nations, especially through combined and multilateral exercises and military security commitments to the Gulf nations.

Continued work on agreements for prepositioning stocks within the region would strengthen initial force buildups within the region.

Planning for the scenarios presented in this paper will highlight serious U.S. shortcomings in various capabilities. Ignoring the shortcomings and planning only for Iraq's intentions is a blueprint for disaster. Just like the United States, Iraq learned many lessons from its mistakes in the Gulf War. Since the Gulf War did not solve Iraq's problems and Iraq still maintains its claim of Kuwait, it's conceivable that Iraq will attempt to annex Kuwait in the future. Applying what it learned from the Gulf War, Iraq may have learned how to fight the United States and win in the next Gulf War.

## NOTES

### Preface

1. The term "Gulf War" is used to describe a number of different wars in the Persian Gulf region. In this paper, "Gulf War" will be used to identify the crisis and conflict from August 1990 through February 1991 involving the invasion and liberation of Kuwait.

### Chapter II

2. Douglas W. Craft, "An Operational Analysis of the Persian Gulf War," Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA: August 1992, p. 1.

3. Economics was the primary driving force behind Saddam's decision to invade Kuwait. By 1990 the burden of the eight-year war with Iran and of the rebuilding the Iraqi military forces had left Iraq's economy virtually bankrupt with over \$80 billion foreign debt, heavy repayment delinquencies, steep inflation, and more than \$200 million in reconstruction costs. For additional information on Iraq's economic situation, see Norvell B. DeAtkine, "The Middle East Scholars and the Gulf War," Parameters, Summer 1993, pp. 53-63; and Alan Geyer and Barbara G. Green, Lines In The Sand: Justice And The Gulf War. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992, pp. 37-40. For additional information on Iraq's historical claim of Kuwait see DeAtkine, p. 56; Miron Rezun, Saddam Hussein's Gulf Wars: Ambivalent Stakes in the Middle East. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1992, p. 54; and Walid Khalidi, The Gulf Crisis: Origins and Consequences. Washington, DC: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1991, pp. 9-12. For additional information on Iraq's security and access to the Persian Gulf, see Ruzan, p. 55.

4. Craft, pp. 1-4.

5. Ibid., p. 11.

6. Rezun, p. 67.

7. Norman Cigar, "Iraq's Strategic Mindset and the Gulf War: Blueprint for Defeat," The Journal of Strategic Studies, March 1992, p. 3.

8. U.S. Dept. of Defense, Conduct of the Persian Gulf Conflict: Final Report to Congress. Washington, DC: April 1992, p. 72.

9. Sciolino, Elaine. The Outlaw State. New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1991, p. 16.

10. Ibid., p. 16.

11. H. Norman Schwarzkopf and Peter Petre, It Doesn't Take A Hero. New York, NY: Bantam Books, 1992, p. 295.

12. Sciolino, p. 16.
13. Jeffery Record, Hollow Victory: A Contrary View of the Gulf War. New York, NY: Brassey's, Inc., 1993, pp. 82-84.
14. U.S. Dept. of Defense, Conduct of the Persian Gulf Conflict: An Interim Report to Congress. Washington, DC: July 1991, p. 2-8.
15. Brian J. Collins, "Airpower in the Persian Gulf: Soviet Analysis," Unpublished Paper, Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe, Brussels, Belgium: 1992, p. 14.
16. Record, pp. 64-67.
- 17: Ibid., p. 67.
18. James F. Dunnigan and Austin Bay, From Shield To Storm: High-Tech Weapons, Military Strategy, and Coalition Warfare in the Persian Gulf. New York, NY: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1992, p. 316.
19. Bard E. O'Neill and Ilana Kass, "The Persian Gulf War: A Political-Military Assessment," Comparative Strategy, Washington, DC: April-Jun 1992, p. 231.
20. Carl Von Clausewitz et al, On War, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976, p. 80.

### **Chapter III**

21. Record, p. 149.
22. William C. Adams, "Opinion and Foreign Policy," Foreign Service Journal, May 1984, p. 30.
23. Adams, p. 30.
24. Sciolino, p. 220.
25. Record, pp. 73-74.
26. Ibid., p. 93.
27. Craft, pp. 4-5.
28. Ibid.
29. Sun Tzu, pp. 77-78.

30. Roger Hilsman, George Bush vs. Saddam Hussein. Novato, CA: Presido Press, 1992, p. 56.

31. Kenneth L. Vaux, Ethics and the Gulf War: Religion, Rhetoric, and Righteousness. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1992, p. 17.

32. Schwarzkopf, p. 313.

33. Dunnigan, pp. 425-426.

34. Schwarzkopf, p. 326.

35. Numerous senior military officers and civilian guests at the Naval War College speaking candidly on a nonattribution basis have expressed serious doubts about the ability of the United States military force's capability to fight two MRCs.

36. Hassan El Badri et al, The Ramadan War, 1973. New York, NY: Hippocrene Books, 1978, pp. 47-51.

37. Badri, pp. 45-52.

#### Chapter IV

38. Record, p. 96 and p. 119.

39. Schwarzkopf, p. 313.

40. Two speakers at the Naval War College who spoke candidly during an elective on a nonattribution basis stated that the United States would not escalate (i.e., use nuclear weapons) for a chemical or biological attack on U.S. forces. The United States would retaliate with precision guided munitions at a "to be determined" politically valuable target.

41. Record, p. 87.

42. Les Aspin, The Aspin Papers. Sanctions, Diplomacy, and War in the Persian Gulf. Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1991, pp. 50-52.

43. Record, p. 152.

44. Dunnigan, pp. 314-316.

#### Chapter V

45. Conversation with ASW experts onboard U.S.S. Dallas attack submarine on April 22, 1994.

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